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MARTIN LUTHER'S DOCTRINE OF FAITH

A Thesis Presented for the
Degree of Master of Arts

1928

Submitted by

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MARTIN LUTHER'S DOCTRINE OF FAITH

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INTRODUCTION

The value of Martin Luther's place in the world's history lies in his unique contribution of the place of faith in man's salvation: born the son of a German peasant in the latter part of the fifteenth century, died the emancipator of human salvation from the confines of the church in the middle of the sixteenth century. He stands as a product of the Northern European Renaissance a part of that spirit that gave new vigor to life by searching out the meaning of the thought of antiquity and interpreting it for his contemporaries and for all like-minded men since his time.

The purpose of this thesis is to present a study of Luther's doctrine of faith; to give the main doctrines of Paul and Augustine as basic for Luther's own conception; to show the influences of his early training on his doctrine; to trace through the development of his faith as it took him out of the Catholic Church; and to set forth his doctrine as found in his major works.

PAUL'S CONCEPTION OF FAITH

Introduction:

In the development of Christ's principles of living, no man has contributed a more valuable testimony of personal experience than Paul. It was he who first carried the gospel out of its native place and implanted it in the heart of another nation; it was he who first broadened its message by introducing it into Roman culture; it was he who first started to fulfill the words of Jesus, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel" to Gentile as well as Jew. Although living at the time of Jesus, he was not taught by Jesus, but was converted by the Spirit of Jesus and therefore he can share his experiences with others who have not seen him. All men since Jesus' time must have fellowship with Jesus in Paul's way.

Paul was a persecutor of the Christians, an intensely religious man who exerted every energy to check the spread of what he thought to be a false conception of the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecy. His life was dedicated to the earning of his salvation which could come only through carrying out the Law, as was directed by the Scriptures. He knew that the opposing party was claiming a new means of salvation, he knew this means was through Jesus, he knew in detail the tenets of his opponents so that he would be intelligent in his attack; and because he knew these facts, the truth dawned for him.

The new light of revelation shone out from the sudden conviction that faith in Jesus and not the performance of deeds in obedience to the Law was the only true way to attain salvation. The realization came to him as he reflected on the facts of life, death, and the resurrection of Jesus as accepted by the Christians and as he thought about the Old Testament proofs which upheld these claims; for some it was a vision of Christ to him, for others it was a gradual changing of his beliefs over a period of time; for others it was neither of the two preceding extreme positions, but a transforming flash of understanding arrived at as a result of knowing the truth.

Development of Doctrine

Paul's doctrine was formulated in answer to the following question: What if Messianic righteousness, necessary for the Kingdom were not to be understood in the ordinary sense of fulfilling the Law, but consisted in a gift of God which could be secured only by the new means of salvation which was offered by the Messiah's atoning death?[1] Paul starts with the assumption that man is sinful. "What the Law imparts is the consciousness of sin. But now we have a righteousness of God disclosed apart from law altogether; it is attested by the Law and prophets, but it is a righteousness of God which comes by believing in Jesus Christ." Romans 3:21,22. "Sinful man,

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1 - Stevens, G.B. Pauline Theology, p. 23

upon condition of exercising faith in the Redeemer who has made a full provision for man's acceptance with God, is declared to be righteous in God's sight....Faith is used in contrast to works, opposite to achievement. It is self-surrender, humility, acceptance. Positively defined, faith is trust in God's grace, personal trust in Christ, in whom that grace is chiefly revealed and assured to sinful man."[1]

Obedience to Law had held the primary place in Paul's earlier thinking; by accepting the doctrine of faith as the way to salvation he does not cancel the value of the Law, but rather makes it a corollary for those who live under it. The Jews who obey the Law will be acquitted by God through Jesus Christ; the Gentiles who obey the Law's requirements, although they have no written law, but are governed by their conscience, will also be acquited.[2] The carrying out of the Law thus becomes the natural result of the Jews' faith in Christ.

Paul makes Jesus the central authority in his teaching, and gives God importance as He is revealed through Jesus, such was the nature of his own experience. "To the asker after God, Paul points out Jesus, to the seeker after God, he brings the preaching of the cross....God gave Jesus to die on the cross, that thus provision might be made whereby God could pardon sin and still show its awfulness."[3] Paul was converted by the Spirit of Jesus: "I tell you the gospel I preach is not a human affair; no man put it into

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1 -Romans, Chap. 2
2 - Lowstutter - Paul, Campaigner for Christ, p. 170-171
3 - Ibid

my hands, no man taught me what it meant, I had it by a revelation of Jesus Christ." Galatians 1:11-13. Experience in Christ, fellowship with Christ, to have the indwelling spirit, according to Paul, are the conditions whereby one lives in harmony with Christ's principles and has a unity of purpose with his ideals, hopes, purposes, and plans. "I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, Christ lives in me; the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me." Galatians 2:20. Paul in his struggles after righteousness proved the inability of all human strivings to bring peace and that salvation was not conditioned upon man's merits and achievements, but that God gives man grace through Jesus Christ and that man in having faith in Jesus Christ accepts that grace and thus gains salvation.

AUGUSTINE'S CONCEPTION OF FAITH

Augustine stands as the bulwark that held paganism at bay while he strengthened the forces of Christianity, and established it as a lasting power in the lives of men. Breaking through the closely built walls of pagan education built up during his youth, wherein was implanted the conception that religion was but a cover for sexual experience[1], came a driving, tormenting, never-satisfying search after God. It left in its wake a shattered mass of pagan educational debris as it carried him out of his earlier life and into the stretches of unexplored areas where moral life, Christianity and the power of the indwelling spirit were as yet untilled ground. Through his own severe struggle to find God, he developed a firm stand and as bishop of Hippo he built a strong Catholic theology to battle for the Catholic Church against the African sect; it was a theology which made for uniformity of belief and authority and saved God at the heart of the universe. Upon his foundations, did the Catholic Church of the Middle Ages rest firmly until the days of the Reformation.

Augustine is called the Father of the Roman Church and of the Reformation, of Biblicists and of mystics; even the Renaissance and modern empirical philosophy are indebted to him. He did not introduce new dogmas, but transformed old dogmatic material. The tenets of occidental

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1 - Confessions, Book 1, Chap. XVI

Christianity which he confirmed and transformed, are: a more vital conception of God, a strong feeling of responsibility to the Judge, consciousness of God as a moral power, Christ whose work possesses infinite value for us in the sight of God, placatio (satisfaction) of God through his death, the Church as a pedagogical institution relying on the means of salvation (sacraments), Holy Scripture as Lex Dei (law of God), and the conceiving of Christian life from the point of view of guilt, atonement, and merit.[1] Such is his theological position.

Out of his constant search for God came his stand concerning Christian piety; on the one side was sin and misery overcome by faith, humility, and love; on the other side, was the Catholic element by which was created an intermingling of the freest, individual surrender to the Divine with the constant, obedient submission to the Church as an institution endowed with the means of grace. The emphasis of the church as an organ of grace by which such piety was secured is developed in the four points following: 1. The authority of the Church: the individual by himself cannot have full and safe understanding of truth revealed. He taught that the Church stands for the truth of the faith, where the individual is not able to recognize the same and that accordingly, acts of faith are at the same time acts of obedience. 2. Importance of the Church over God: although he stated in his Confessions that religion is the possessing of the living God, yet in

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1 - Harnack, Outline of the History of Dogma, p.344.

the interpretation of his theology, he exchanged the living God for the grace and the sacraments, and thus compressed that which was most living and free into a material benefit entrusted to the Church, thus founding the sacramental Church, which was to be so severely attacked by Luther. 3. Doctrine of merits: theoretically, he acknowledged the supremacy of faith, but practically, he overshadowed it with the ultimate destiny of the person depending on the merits through the Church. He saw in merits resulting from faith the aim of all Christian development and failed to understand the real essence of faith as the highest gift of God. 4. No definite aim in this life: he shared the Catholic attitude that Christian piety was a preparation for the next world, and declared it was an illusion to believe that Christianity could be transformed into a religion of this world as his Protestant successors were later to declare.[1]

Augustine's conception of faith was inherent in his conviction about guilt and grace; he held that all sin was sin against God. "Sin was the sphere and form of the inner life of every natural man."[2] Man's hope lies in the grace and love of God as shown in Christ; by whom He calls us back from our desire to be independent beings exclusive from God, through faith in and love of Christ. But "faith is faith in the"gratia gratis data" (grace freely given) and love is joy in God blended with that humility which renounces all that is individual."[3] Augustine ac-

1 - Harnack - Outline of the History of Dogma. p. 339-341
2 - Ibid - p. 70
3 - Ibid - p. 338

cepted the dictum of the Church as necessary for true faith, and thus gave to the Church the imperious power to grant to the poor individual a confidence which it would not attain by any personal effort. Since man is sinful, his one goal in life is to attain salvation which is through the Church. Humanity is, according to experience, void of God; but the God-man, Christ, by his death brought power to replenish empty humanity with divine love, that is the gratia gratis data, the beginning, the middle, and the end of our salvation. God has predestined that some shall be saved, believed Augustine, and salvation comes only through grace by way of the church. The elements of grace he considered to be: the withdrawal of man from his condition of sin and the creation of good will which makes it possible for him to earn merits; resulting in the development of a faith based on belief, obedience, and love; the actual visible working of grace in the church parallel to faith, begins with baptism which blots out past sin. The end of grace is in justification which is not judgment upon the sinner, but the completing of the process of passing from an impious to a just state; it depends on faith and takes place by infusion of the spirit of love in the heart of the believer, whereby, admitted into the unity of communion with Christ (Church), he receives a new desire and capacity for good works. [1]

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1 - Harnack, Outlines of the History of Dogma, p. 372.

Such were the main streams of thought out of which Luther was to build his conception of faith. In his soul - wrenching search after salvation he followed Augustine through his boundless desserts of individual experience, and through his route that was enclosed on both sides by the Church, only to find that such a way did not bring him to his assurance of salvation. He went back to the earliest source, the Scriptures, and turned to study Paul's experience, finding herein the simple faith of one who had accepted Jesus, and who, because he had, lived a life that was rich in the assurance of salvation. With such a faith salvation was not that of a legal bargain between God and man, but was one that grew according to one's progress in the Jesus way. Out of an understanding of such a faith did Luther build his, one which bore the simplicity of Paul's and yet one which was shaped by the age in which he lived.

PART II. LUTHER'S DOCTRINE OF FAITH

I. INFLUENCES OF LUTHER'S TRAINING ON HIS FAITH

INFLUENCES OF LUTHER'S TRAINING ON HIS FAITH

CHILDHOOD TRAINING.

The development of Luther's conception of faith which was destined to wedge its way into the very heart of the church and to bring about a lasting separation between the two sections, now called Roman Catholic and Protestant, is best understood in the light of his early life. He lived at a time when Christianity was bound up in the authority, teachings, anddemands of the Church, and yet hereditary and environmental factors played a large part in his building up a new and forceful emphasis upon Pauline theology. Two conflicting tendencies in his make-up are traced back to his parents: from his father, an independence and determination to rely on his own convictions; although a loyal church member, his father considered the human obligations to his family as greater than those to his church and is reported to have said during an illness when the priest urged him to make peace with God by giving money to the clergy, "I have many children, I will leave my property to them; they need it more;"[1] From his mother, a double trend; a wholesome humor - her favorite saying being, "If the world smiles not on you and me, the fault is ours"[2]; and an imaginative, sensitive nature; his mother was one who lived in fear and terror of evil spirits.

His environment was of such a nature that a weak will would have been deadened in its rigid discipline, but

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1 - McGiffert, p. 6
2 - Ibid p. 6

a strong will, such as Luther's was only made stronger by the rough treatment. He was reared on the theory of spare the rod and spoil the child. In later years, speaking of the discipline of children, he quoted his mother "as an example of the way in which parents with the best intentions often go too far in punishing, and forget to pay due attention to the pecularities of each child. However, he declared that such rigid discipline was not that of unloving severity which blunts the spirit of a child and leads to artfulness and deceit. Their strictness, well-intended, and proceeding from a genuine and moral earnestness of purpose, furthered in him a strictness and tenderness of conscience, which then and in after years made him deeply and keenly sensitive of every fault committed in the eyes of God; a sensitiveness which so far from relieving him of fear, made him apprehensive on account of sins that existed only in his imagination. It was a later consequence of discipline, as Luther himself informs us, that he took refuge in a convent[1]. His wilful disposition was, no doubt, sharpened under the influence of his early schooling. The severity of the schoolmasters was a different thing from the strictness of his parents. "Schoolmasters in those days were tyrants and executioners, the schools were prisons and hells, and in spite of blows, trembling, fear, and misery nothing was ever taught."[2] With our modern educational principles, the phrase "in spite of" would be changed to "because of".

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1 - Kostlin, Julius, Life of Luther - p. 11,12.
2 - Ibid, p. 13

There is little doubt but that the harshness of his youthful training did have a serious effect on the trend of his later life, for "where such fear enters a man in childhood, it can hardly be rooted out again as long as he lives. As he once trembled at every word of father or mother, to the end of his life he is afraid of a rustling leaf."[1] In the light of modern psychology, one can appreciate his for a time unconquerable fear of God during monastery days as a hangover from his childhood world of fear.

The church itself played no small part in the shaping of Luther's attitude toward life. Coupled with his boyhood fear was his dependence on the church as the groundwork of Christian life, as was to be expected of all good churchmen young and old. In the church he was baptized, and catechised in the Christian truth, and for that reason he, always acknowledged what he had received from it. But he blamed the church and school for the distorted idea that he gained regarding Christian salvation and also concerning his own proper religious attitude. He was taught the narrowing conceptions of Christianity; that God was a Being unapproachably sublime and of awful holiness; Christ, the Saviour, Mediator, and Advocate, whose revelation can only bring judgment to those who reject salvation, as the threatening Judge, against whose wrath, as against that of God, man sought for intercession and mediation from the Virgin and other saints. .... Of his early religious belief, he

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1 - McGiffert, A.C.-Martin Luther, p. 8.

says that Christ appeared to him as seated on a rainbow, like a stern Judge; from Christ men turned to the saints, to be their patrons.[1]

COLLEGE LIFE.

Luther's university days at Erfurt about 1500 would at first appraisal appear to have little significance in the later development of his faith, so full were they of the activities of a natural college life. He was no recluse, but was witty, companionable, and talkative; he said of himself: "I say more in a day than the Emperor Charles in a year."[2] He was gifted with musical talent and had a love for music, ranking it next to theology in importance. Because of his strong liking for logic and his interest in philosophical questions, his friends named him "The Philosopher". Beneath his gay appearance there ran a serious strain in which was rooted later developments of his thinking. Although Denifle classes Luther as a "Crass ignorance" (Bohmer, p.177) the testimony of other writers in general is that he was outstanding because of his keen mind and insatiable search for truth, and stood second in a class of seventeen for his master's degree. The accepted philosophy which was offered at Erfurt was Scholasticism, founded on the traditions of the church, pure logic or dialectics, dealing with the mere forms and expressions

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1 - Kostlin, op.cit p. 19
2 - McGiffert, op.cit. p. 13.

of thought, as Kostlin conceives it to be (p.30) or founded on reason, clear definitions, logical proofs, systematic thinking, according to Grisar, (p.85). Together with his Scholastic grounding, was the arrival of Humanism, a fresh and vigorous impulse to the study of classical antiquity, which gave bold and incisive criticism of traditional elements of the Church (Grisar p.41) but which brought in a new era of intellectual culture (Kostlin p. 31). Luther was strongly influenced by the spirit of the Humanists; his mind naturally inclined toward a freer treatment of the subject than was allowed under the rigid discipline of Scholasticism, and found expression in the opportunity for feeling and imagination as found in the Humanist group, yet he did not identify himself with them, but retained an independent stand. Such a normal college training as he experienced during the impressionable years of adolescence, served later but to pull him back from an abnormal attitude during monastery days, and to give him a more balanced perspective on life as he endeavored to build up his new doctrine.

Something happened at the close of his university days, which changed the entire course of his life; it is called a conversion, a term which covers the different interpretations of each historian. Although the actual experience itself cannot be adequately explained, because of its very nature, a reasonable cause of its occurrence can be formulated from the facts. The crisis was an outlet

for his pent-up state; it was a reaction after hard study for his master's degree; life was empty for him, because his law study had brought on a dislike for the legal profession and the law practice seemed but a scheming to defeat justice; the death of a friend stirred him to meditate on religious problems - all these contributing forces working together brought him to that moment when he had one clear purpose and he turned to find relief within the walls of a monastery. He declared that his monastic vow was a compulsory one, forced from him by terror and the fear of death, during a terrific thunder storm when he had cried out "Help, Anna, Beloved Saint! I will be a monk,"[1] Having taken such a vow, even though he repented using those words, he considered which was the best monastery and joined the Augustinian monks at Erfurt.

Monastic Life.

Religion up until this time had been of secondary importance to him. Now it became the one purpose that controlled all his thought and activity. On entering the monastery, it was his firm belief that he would be free from that terrible fear which had lurked in the background of his mind all his life; that by the painstaking observance of rules and orders, he would find relief from his terror of eternal punishment. With dogged determination, he set himself to appease the divine wrath of God by carrying out

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1 - Kostlin, op. cit. p. 38.

the petty tasks assigned him even though they seemed a mockery, and did not bring him the sought-for peace. The long periods for confession, meditation, and prayer which filled in the hours not spent in work, gave him much time for introspection; during such times, he often grew despondent since the very forms of the monastery which sufficed to bring peace to his fellow monks, seemed to strike dead with him. In his effort to satisfy his natural bent to active life, he endured self-mortification, to a far greater extent than was required; he once said, "If ever a monk gained heaven by his monkery, I must have done so....For I should have martyred myself if I had kept it up longer, with watching, praying, reading, and other labors."[1]

Luther's independence, which was later to prove the germ of Protestantism, was evident in his religious practices. He knew that he must go his own way; that way was checked by his lack of faith. His confessions were the prescribed way, but they did not produce the hoped-for satisfaction; he was constantly worried and depressed by thoughts of religion; he was troubled by gloomy thoughts on predestination, and the recollection of his own sins. There were two temptations which he had to continually fight down: to despair of his salvation, and to blaspheme God. Often he wondered if he was the only one tempted by the devil; at times he could hardly retain his bodily powers, or keep his breath or be comforted, so great was the tur-

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1 -McGiffert, op. cit. - p. 37.

moil in his soul. (Grisar, p. 19). The cause of his growing unrest is best explained by a strange deeply rooted spirit which became active with his entrance into the monastery, a spirit which was not reached by monastery rules, which made him doubt the counsels he received, and to wonder if they were not illusions. His search seemed to be beyond the confines of the monastery. Catholic writers denounce him for this trait, "Sad experience taught him the results of self-will and self-sufficiency;"[1] while Protestant writers praise him for his reaching out to something beyond man's present experience. Yet there were men within the cloister who sympathized; Staupitz was attracted by his careworn look, restless manner, and peculiar, bright deep set eyes; in him Luther confided his doubts concerning salvation. To which his friend replied: "Why torment yourself with such doubts? Look at the wounds of Christ and his blood shed for you. There you will see your predestination to heaven shining forth to your comfort."[2] But Luther did not; therein lay the genesis of his whole problem.

The question naturally arises at this point, "Why didn't he see? Why couldn't he honestly accept it all as others had done and were doing? Coupled with his rigid boyhood training and his particularly delicate and sensitive conscience was an unusually keen and live sense of truth. The teaching of Biel of the Occamist school that he should have humility and love of God, could not be met

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1 - Grisar - Luther, p. 11
2 - Ibid, p. 19

in his own self-examination. He believed that man could do anything that he willed in accordance with the Occamist teachings; but his reason would not let him love the God of arbitrariness who damned and saved as it pleased him. (Bohmer, p.79). The struggles of his soul drove him at times to an almost uncanny state of fear. Grisar relates that Luther had a fit during High Mass when the story of the man possessed was being told. "He fell to the ground and in his paroxysms behaved like one mad. At the same time he cried out, as his brother monks affirmed, 'It is not I, it is not I', meaning that he was not the man possessed."[1] Such an outburst seems to be rationally explained not as a fit, but as the snapping of the tension due to over-wrought nerves and the grip of fear. In denying his own possession of the demon, he is but trying to prove to himself that he is not afraid as the man in the story was.

The crystallization of Luther's doubtings which led him out of the limits of the Catholic system where grace comes through the faithful carrying out of good works as authorized by the Church in the following question: "How will I, the single individual, become absolutely certain of forgiveness of sin and thereby of the grace of God?"[2] Or, to state it in the words of the Catholic writer, "As a result of his own way and cultivating his morbid fears, he never succeeded in shaking himself free from the thought of predestination....The whole theology which he later set up

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1 - Grisar, op.cit. p. 17
2 - Bohmer-Luther in the Light of Recent Research - p.82

against that of the Catholic church was in some sense dominated by his ideas on predestination."[1]

STATE OF CATHOLIC FAITH ABOUT 1500

The state of Catholic faith in Luther's time was in theory not at variance with the Augustinian conception that salvation comes through faith in Christ and that this faith comes through grace by way of the church. "True religion is true worship of a true God; not according to the individual's own ideas, but to what God has revealed to us through the Church which is the infallible guidetoward salvation. The Church has certain characteristics: Holy, Catholic, Apostolic; the Roman Catholic Church has these; if then she is the true Church, her teachings must be accepted.... It is logical and consistent for the Catholic Church which claims an infallible attitude in teaching revealed truth, to draw up articles of faith and demand for them an internal assent and an outward confession of her children."[2] Pauline theology had set faith in Christ as the first essential for salvation and built up around it the structure of the church doctrines. Augustine had still retained the seed of faith in his organization of the Church; but since his time, there was a gradual receding of the importance of faith and an increasing of the importance of the sacramental church, as requisite for salvation until about 1500 the actual practice of the church was but the carrying out of the outward

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1 - Grisar, op. cit.-p. 20
2 - Catholic Encyclopedia - Art. "Faith".

works of grace without the stimulus of individual faith. The mediaeval church in practice was but a shell of works; it no longer held at its heart the purifying, sacred gem of faith which was necessary to bring beauty of good works. The startling accusations of Luther to this effect not only developed a new attitude toward faith and works for those who sought individual freedom outside the church, but stimulated by his condemnations, there developed a new spirit, headed by Loyola who brought back the meaning of faith within the Catholic church itself and sought to purify the works therein. The Catholic theologian declares that faith shown by works is ever the doctrine of the Catholic Church; but in the carrying out of such a belief, faith is largely taken for granted as already existing in the individual, and the church assumes the responsibility for the outward confession and expression of that faith. Brought up under such a system of thought, Luther's difficulty was in not being sure of that faith which was taken for granted; and in seeking to establish his faith first he found that he had to disrupt the whole scheme of the existing Church.

II. LUTHER'S DEVELOPMENT OF FAITH

Changing Ideals as a Teacher, Preacher, and Administrator

Luther had a vision for life as it should be; in other words he was a prophet of his time; with a prophet's keeness he could not accept the traditional teachings which his brother monks regarded as final; with a prophet's sensitiveness, he saw the flaws in the existing standards and as a result was led out of the monastery regime to the university chair; with a prophet's insight, he taught what he honestly believed to be truth and was not at first aware that he was pulling away from his church. No definite date can be set as the beginning of Luther's changed convictions but some authorities suggest that his ordination as priest brought a new fear and anxiety which goaded him on in his search. "To have Christ's body, the very Christ Himself, and God actually present before him at the mass on the altar; to offer the Body of Christ as a sacrifice to the living and eternal God, all this so overpowered him at his first mass, that he could scarcely remain at the altar".[1] The study of the Scripture gradually revealed to him the light which was to determine his future convictions. He found great difficulty in grasping the meaning of what Paul said about the righteousness of God, Romans 1:17, "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith'". He

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1 - Kostlin, op. cit. p. 54.

struggled long over the words trying to discover in his own experience just what they really meant; finally it came to him that righteousness given freely by the grace of God must be what Paul meant; the grace of God who forgives those who have faith in His message of mercy, justifies them and gives them eternal life. This understanding came to him as a gradual realization during the last of his stay at Erfurt, and his life was a living out of its truth. The change from his ascetic practices of looking inward and upward to looking outward to regenerate the church and Christian society brought a broadening of his intellectual outlook; thus his first years as teacher in the University at Wittenberg marked a transformation in his major convictions. (Bohmer, p. 52). He was called in 1508 to teach Aristolelian logic, with knowledge as the content of his teaching, but he experienced a deepening of religious interests and wanted to change from philosophy to theology, meaning "that theology which searches into the very kernel of the nut, the heart of the wheat, and the marrow of the bone"[1]; he was now confident that he was on the right path in his search for faith.

When in 1511, he was sent to Rome to secure the Pope's sanction on changing the administration of the Augustinian order in Germany, he saw Italian life in the height of its beauty and in the depth of its wickedness. Varying dramatic traditions have been built up out of his visit to the seat of Catholicism, but in the words of McGiffert

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1 - Kostlin, op. cit. p. 58

"The truth is that the Roman journey was no more than an interesting episode in his life, and though it doubtless enriched his mind and broadened his outlook, it had nothing whatever to do with his career as a reformer."[1] Kostlin gives a slightly different appraisal of his trip. Although his experiences at Rome where he saw the worldly life of the pope and bishop did not shake his faith in the authority of hierarchy even though it had such unworthy ministers, yet later when he did attack the Papacy, his experiences helped him to form his conclusions, "I would not have missed seeing Rome for a 1000 florins, for I might then have thought I was doing an injustice to the Pope. But as we see, we speak."[3]

Throughout these early days, Luther was building up for himself firm principles which were to support him in the days of struggle ahead. As licentiate, a preliminary step toward his doctorate, he promised to defend the truth of the Gospel; he had this oath in mind when he afterwards declared he had sworn on his Beloved Bible to preach it faithfully and in its purity. In his doctor's subject, Luther presented a new theology, the Bible; it had, up until his time, been generally undervalued in school theology. He started with a series of lectures on the Psalms in which he tried to find pictorial allegories relating to Christ, His work of salvation and His people. He even speaks of faith in his earliest notes on some of the Psalms; his commentary on the 120th reads as follows:

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3 - Kostlin, op. cit. p. 62
1 - McGiffert, op. cit. p. 45

"To read the word, to hear the word, and to teach the word, are indeede excellent, and heavenly works, which require the helpe and aide of the Holy Ghost; but the inward practice of faith so to convert unto the Lord, so to pray, so to presume of God's favor that they prayer shall please him and that he will heare the same, that is a hard matter indeed."[1] In his use of the Bible, he followed the original text; his interpretation was by natural, grammatical, and historical exegesis, for it was his opinion that the Church ought not to determine what the Scripture teaches, but the word of God ought to fix the doctrine of the Church.

The whole groundwork of Luther's Christian faith which was to support him in the fight that was to come was laid in his preparation of lectures and early sermons. As he sought to interpret the Scriptures for his people, he found therein the true meaning of faith; his exposition of Paul's letter to the Galatians 3:23 shows how he ferreted out the truth concerning what was to be the fundamental guide of his life: "Only faith justifieth without works, (which notwithstanding our adversaries can by no means abide). For Paul here strongly concludeth that the law doth not quicken nor give life, because it is not given to that end. If then the law do not justifie and give life, much less do works justifie. For when Paul saith that the law giveth not life, his meaning is that works do not give life. For it is more to say that the law quickeneth and

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1 - Commentary on the Psalms - Fol. 7

giveth life, than to say that works do quicken and give life. If then the law itself in being fulfilled (although it be impossible that it should be accomplished) do not justifie, much less do works justifie. I conclude therefore, that faith only justifieth and bringeth life, without works."[1]

Besides the light which the Bible threw on his conception of faith, there were two other sources which helped to shape his thinking; he felt the pull of German mysticism which maintained that man goes through an inner struggle for direct communion with God; that man's natural will is dead and that God lives and works in us. Luther, although strongly impressed by the emphasis on inner life, disagreed with the emphasis on submission of the will entirely to God; for he had been trained in the belief of William of Occam that man can do anything that he wills; the Wittenberg monk maintained a synthetic position between the two extremes, namely that personality should not be passive to the will of God; that communion with God meant faith not passivity. Luther was also influenced by Augustine who held to the same fundamental position as Paul in regard to the place of faith; but while Augustine held that faith gave that inward righteousness by which one gains merits through the institution of the church, Luther maintained an independent position that faith alone gave assurance and confidence in the Saviour Christ and that this faith would produce its own genuine fruits without a system of merits in the church.

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1 - Commentary on Galatians - Fol. 165.

It was during his work as a parish preacher and administrator that his beliefs, strengthened through his teaching pursuits, became dynamic principles which produced his real conversion. The Catholic writer, Grisar, declares the falsity of the Protestant view, "that the monk of Wittenberg was first led to his new doctrine through some unusual religious experience by which he attained the joyful assurance of salvation alone, and not by means of good works of Popery and monasticism —— must disappear altogether from history."[1] The Protestant thinker who has experienced the soul's longing for freedom of expression, cannot but deny the view-point stated above; Luther's soul was aflame with a passion for truth, the Popery and monasticism stifled it; only through his own will did he push back the hindrances of the church and give this passion the chance to be fanned by the winds of popular abuses until it became a roaring fire that was destined to give light and warmth to those who sought comfort from the blaze. He realized that God was not a God of fear, but a loving father; he emphasized the practical value in lecturing on the Bible, teaching that theology should be vital and practical and not philosophical and speculative; he attacked the popular abuses and vices in the life of the university town where he was stationed. In his sermons on the Decalogue, he attacked the superstitions of witch craft, saint worship, religious pilgrimages, and beliefs concerning lucky and unlucky days.

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1 - Grisar, op. cit. p. 31

His views, although given by others before him, came from his own observations and experience and thus bore the inspiration of personal testimony. He blamed the clergy for allowing these abuses and declared they had not done their duty in preaching the true gospel of Christ; and yet he was not out of harmony with the church, but was condemning weaknesses as any sincere preacher would do. As provincial vicar for Meissen and Thuringia, he had supervision of eleven convents which he visited; in this duty as elsewhere, he laboured with self-sacrificing zeal for the spiritual welfare of those in his care. "There is no sign that he was consciously breaking with his past. He was developing steadily and naturally, assuming each task as it was laid upon him and addressing himself to one evil after another as he became aware of it."[1] With faith as the dominant force in his life, Luther's entire purpose seemed to be the carrying out in his daily life the principles inherent therein.

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1 - McGiffert - op. cit. p. 75.

ATTACK ON INDULGENCES

Young spirited Luther dared to think for himself, and in so doing his thought ventures led him out beyond the walls of authority where most of his less courageous fellow priests dared not go; his was a courageous soul that heeded not the voice of conservative church fathers, but stormed his way ahead until he could reach the wails of the ignorant people who were caught in the quagmire of popular indulgence abuse, which was sucking them down into its depths. He saw the need of the vital and practical aspect of theology to minister to human needs, rather than the philosophical and speculative aspect to build up a hard, fast dogma. Luther's service as a preacher and teacher, as has been pointed out, was that of shifting the scheme of values of one's religion; more important than good works was faith, more important than church doctrine was man's need; with such a vision for his profession, he strode out into life to put his religion there. The people in his parish were being hoodwinked by the clever indulgence seller, Tetzel into buying the forgiveness of sins with money, receiving thereby a slip of paper which was a receipt for payment, a proof that sins were wiped out! Luther was preaching a new belief of faith which demanded an inner repentance for wrong doing; and just outside was another who was tearing down the belief that he was trying to establish; the people were making indulgences an external cure for an internal disease. Indulgences had become an empty form that had little

value in the gaining of true salvation.

To understand such a practice, it is necessary to study its origin and trace down its degeneracy. Indulgence traffic was based on the penitential system of the Catholic Church. Forgiveness of sins committed after baptism could be secured only through the sacrament of penance. The sacrament of penance required repentance, confession to a priest, performance of acts, or works of penance. If not enough of these were done before death, they had to be continued in purgatory until the debt was cleared up. During the Crusades indulgences were used as full penance to encourage enlistment, later they were extended to those who equipped or sent substitutes and still later they were granted in return for money payment. There came to be also a doctrinal basis for the practice of indulgences; it was believed that the church had a treasury of merits which Christ and the saints had accumulated by their good works before the righteous God. These merits were issues of salvation stock that were sold off by Christ's representatives, the stock salesmen, to ready buyers, who thus became stockholders in the corporation of salvation. An expansion of business brought out a new issue of stock and so, because Leo X, the chief promoter, wanted to build Saint Peter's church at Rome, he sent his salesmen all over the empire to dispose of the new stock. (One wonders if the stock did not become liquidated at times!)

The dangers involved in such a system where a qualitative act is balanced by a quantitative measurement were many. It was a wrong scheme; money payment could not remove a sin. There was a temptation to use money for selfish ends; the whole affair had come to be a mockery: on one side, greed for gain consciously masquerading under the pretense of concern for people's needs; on the other side, the insidious and subtle self-deception of imagining that anything but reality counts in the moral realm; it was but an effort to salve one's conscience by hollow acts of devotion and to try to slip away from one's own sin. The ignorant people were roused up to an emotional frency by such exhortations from the indulgence preacher as "Do you not hear your dead parents crying for you to buy for a small pittance their forgiveness?". A coin in the box worked wonders with the spring lock of purgatory and set free the soul. Indulgences were a sort of Salvation Insurance Policy

The flames of Luther's passion for truth shot out and licked up these abuse-dried husks of accepted belief that were scattered abroad over the land. If the ecclesiastical authorities were allowing a practice which he knew was wrong, he must strike at it - these "get-forgiven-quick" inducements at low rates were inherently wrong. His was a position much the same as that of the true psychologist's today, who witnesses the influence that pseudo-psychologists, such as palmists, phrenologists, and astrologists, exercise on the "all believables". He saw the seriousness of firing

into such a practice already prevalent and so he waited a year after delivering his first sermon against indulgences, he waited until he was thoroughly convinced of his ground, and then he carefully wrote out his position and, according to the custom of the times, he posted a placard on the Church door on October 31, 1517, announcing that his proposed disputation, was to bring forth the truth about indulgences.

Up until such an act, Luther had been building up his position, quietly but firmly; his 95 Theses were an attack on the existing church practices. He was already convinced; his debate was not for his own enlightenment, but for reinforcement by a formal university decision. In thinking through his rejection of indulgences, he came to the conclusion that the whole penitential system of the Catholic Church was wrong, stating in his first thesis that Christ wished the entire life of believers to be repentance. By repentance, he meant a true inward repentance such that self-hatred of one's own sin would make self-imposed punishment a relief for the torture of the soul. He made his final blow against indulgences in his 37th thesis: every true Christian has a share in all benefits of Christ and the Church, given him by God, without the letters of indulgence. In other words, every true Christian has entered into that inner relationship with Christ by which his life becomes a fulfillment of that faith, thus the meaning of the word Christian. In following through his main tenets of a Christian's true repentance and his willingness to suffer,

Luther concludes with the belief that men should take up the Cross of Christ, and not the Cross which bears Papal arms. A Christian must follow Christ through torture, death, and hell, he must suffer the torments of soul that come to all who admit their wickedness and not expect to bribe God's forgiveness with money.

The value of the indulgence controversy for Luther was that it forced him ahead in his own reasoning concerning faith. New questions came up in his mind: if indulgences did not give a Christian the forgiveness of Sin, what did? In answering the question, he reverted to the keynote of his doctrine of salvation which he had already been preaching before the indulgence attack: that salvation came through faith, trust in God's mercy. How was this consistent with penance? He boldly declared that God would grant forgiveness to those who wanted it either through a priest or a brother Christian providing the recipient had faith. No enumeration of particular sins was required, one need only state that he wished to repent; and thus priestly absolution and sacrament really meant nothing to the confessor without that inward faith in his God. If the priest refused absolution to a truly repentant man, the latter could be forgiven just the same. Such a belief, more fully stated in considering Luther's later works, was entirely antagonistic to the accepted authority of the church. "The whole contest on indulgences turned ultimately on the question as to who should

determine disputes about the truth, and where to seek the highest standards and the purest source of Christian truth."[1]

BELIEF LEADS TO DEFINITE STAND AGAINST CHURCH

The first sledge-hammer stroke had been made against the walls of the Church, and its structure began to tremble. Luther's theses were warmly welcomed throughout Germany, by the common people who were already finding indulgences a burden. Since the inflow of indulgence money was checked, the Pope urged an investigation of the monk's disrespect for papal authority, and so he sent Cajetan to Augsburg to arrange for an official meeting in 1518. Luther was in dead earnest over the whole affair as is verified in his words written on his journey, "The will of the Lord be done. Even at Augsburg, even in the midst of his enemies, Jesus Christ reigns. Let Christ live, let Martin die, and every sinner."[2] His stand was that the Church was violating the doctrines of indulgences, that they were being used to fill the private pockets of the Pope. He declared emphatically that the Church's treasure of indulgences did not consist of the merits of Christ, and that faith on the part of the individual was necessary for one to receive value from the sacrament. Cajetan's command was that Luther must retract his indictments against the Church, but this Luther refused to do, since he conscientiously believed his stand was right. He claimed that his opponent's stand was a "blunt

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1 - Kostlin, op. cit. p. 104.
2 - McGiffert, op. cit. p. 118.

naked, unyielding displayal of power"[1], and that if he had been less intolerant, they might have come to an understanding. At the request of friends, Luther wrote a humble letter of apology to the cardinal for his seeming lack of reverence for the Pope, but at the same time he again refused to recant, saying, "So far as concerns the truth of my opinions, I would most gladly revoke everything in accordance with your command, if my conscience in any way permitted it. For I know I ought to be persuaded by no precept, counsel, or kindness to do or say anything against my conscience."[2] When Staupitz learned that he would not obey, he freed him from his vow of monastic obedience, whether for Luther's own sake, or to relieve the Augustinian Order of being responsible for any of his rash deeds is not certain, but at least, it gave him a greater freedom for action with only himself responsible for what he did.

Luther's fire was now up; he knew that the contest was beginning; the inner struggle that had torn his soul for so long was now supplanted by an outward struggle to maintain the position he had arrived at. He justified his stand by having a report of his conference with Cajetan printed, in which he declared that the Papal monarchy was a divine institution only as every temporal power was divine, advanced by the progress of historical development. With candid diplomacy, having already invited papal indignation, he made a formal appeal from the Pope to the Council,

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1 - McGiffert - op. cit. p. 122
2 - Ibid.

thus alligning to his support many of the counciliar party who had been objecting to papal absolutism. The Elector Frederick of Saxony, who was proud to have such a keen professor at his university, served as mediator between the Pope and the independent professor, thus saving the latter from an immediate excommunication at the hands of the Pope.

The second direct conflict that was forced upon the monk of supreme faith because of his conception of the relative value of faith, good works, the Church, and man's own conscience, was with Miltitz, a messenger sent from the Pope to cool down the red hot monk who was kindling a blaze dangerous to papal position. Uppermost in Luther's mind desire was not the desire to disrupt the church as he seemed to be doing, but to put forth his own ideas, which he knew, through his own religious experiences to be true. Thus when Miltitz made his plea for Luther's silence, the latter agreed to do so for the good of the Church, and he also issued a pamphlet advising the people not to interpret his utterances too radically. Contrary to the methods used by his predecessor, Miltitz appealed to the humaneness of Luther and in return received fair play. When the Wittenberg monk was told that his actions were threatening the good of the Church, he was willing to put the welfare of others before his own spiritual satisfaction.

The world is so much in need of leaders that when a man has once shown his power to lead, it is difficult for him to retire again into private life. Luther was unconsciously directing his life to just such a place. The spirit

of nationalism was growing in Germany, and with it, a hatred for Roman supremacy. When the newly elected Charles of Spain neglected the interests of the German people, they looked to some one within their own ranks to champion their cause. Luther, in his stands against oppression and authority, was striking for the freedom of the individual soul, which would bring with it the freedom of the individual man. His daring declaration against indulgences had called forth from a Catholic theologian, John Eck, a storm of criticism in a pamphlet called "obelisks", to which Luther had replied with equal fierceness in a pamphlet called "Asterisks". Again the disputewas on; Luther, although he had agreed to remain silent, could no longer do so without seeming to retract his beliefs; this he could not do, and be true to his own conscience. At Eck's request, he accompanied his associate Carlstadt, to the Leipsic Debate in 1519, thoroughly convinced after diligent study, as to the fallibility of papal claims, while Eck was equally firm in his belief in absolutism and infallibility.

Luther entered the disputation with a realization of what it would mean for his future, as is shown in a letter written to his friend Spalatin:

> "Many things I hold back for the sake of the prince and our university. If I were elsewhere, I would vomit them out against Rome or rather Babylon, the devastator of Bible and Church. The truth about the Bible and the Church, my Spalatin, cannot be discussed without offending this beast. Therefore do not hope that I shall be quiet and undisturbed unless you wish me to give up theology altogether. Let our friends think me mad. This affair will not have an end, if it be of God, until all my friends desert me,

> as his disciples and acquaintances deserted Christ, and truth be left alone, which will save itself by its own power and not by mine nor thine, nor any man's. This hour I have expected from the beginning ....If I perish, the world will lose nothing. The Wittenbergers, by the grace of God, have already progressed so far they do not need me at all. What will You? I, worthless man that I am, fear I may not be counted worthy to suffer and die for such a cause. That felicity belongs to better men, not to so vile a sinner."[1]

The utmost confidence in his faith coupled with the utmost humility of one who knows for him there is no other way, marks for all ages the bigness of the man Luther.

There were two opposing conceptions as to the subject of debate: for Luther it was to decide once and for all on the question of indulgences; for Eck, it was to make a heretic out of Luther by forcing him to state that the Council of Constance erred in condemning Hus, and by calling forth from him his refusal to accept the infallibility of the Pope. Luther did declare: "It is certain that among the articles of John Hus and the Bohemians are many most Christian and evangelical and these the universal church cannot condemn....A council cannot make divine right of what is not by its nature such, nor can it make that heresy which is not against divine right."[2] In asserting himself thus, he rejected the one ultimate authority, the general council, which the Catholic Christians had depended on for centuries. Even though he still was in accord with the Church's doctrines in other points, to differ on such a fundamental con-

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1 - McGiffert - op. cit. p. 138-9
2 - Ibid - p. 142.

cept was to expose himself to excommunication. He had swept away any external authority, his own conscience and his own vivid religious experience were his only authority. Clearly and with definite points, the debate showed Luther just where he stood: his absolute assurance of faith as the only way of justification necessarily made the place of the church as of prime importance recede in his consideration of the Christian life.

It was a tremendous step for him to take; he found himself suddenly cut loose from the historic chain of churchmen; he suffered the aloneness of one who breaks off from the trodden path; but he also enjoyed the life-giving freedom that comes to one who has left the world behind as he develops for himself an attitude of mind independent of popular thought. His uncompromising pursuit after truth led him finally to appear at the Diet of Worms in 1521, called by the Pope to discuss German affairs; thoroughly sure of his ground, he faced the officials of Empire and Papacy and denounced for all time the infallibility of the Pope and the Council, declaring with that undying force which comes through the pragmatic test of the living out of one's beliefs, that the only authority in a Christian life is the individual's interpretation of the Scriptures, and in so doing, he knew there could be no reconciliation with the Pope, saying, " I have broken once for all, never to be reconciled, from Rome."

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1 - Kostlin - op. cit. p. 240

III. LUTHER'S WRITINGS AS DEMONSTRATIONS OF HIS FAITH.

LUTHER'S WRITINGS AS DEMONSTRATIONS OF HIS FAITH

ADDRESS TO THE GERMAN NOBILITY

Martin Luther lived by faith: from fear of God during his childhood days, through questioning in university days, through soul wrenching doubts in monastery life, there grew up within him a new understanding of the rule of life which was best expressed for him in the words of the Apostle Paul, "The just shall live by faith"; this understanding developed into a certain holiness of life which bore for him rich fruits. After he had taken his stand at Leipsic against the Pope, he crystallized his beliefs in "The Magna Charta of Protestantism" wherein he set forth the implications of his doctrine as it applied to the way of life. In the three works he built up a program for economic and political reform, based on his conception of faith; he cleaned up the interior of church doctrine as was demanded by his faith; and he presented the statue of the Christian man who adopts such a doctrine in his own living. Luther sensed the purity and simplicity of Paul's faith, and he also sensed the corruption and involved structure of the Church of his own times which presumed to encase that faith, The Church of the early sixteenth century had lost the essence of Christ's message, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life"; it was a self-running machine with the Pope at the center, around which it revolved; the papal officials had lost or else had never had, the spark of new life by which Luther was reborn. Consequently, Luther saw the existing

church in which he was reared as an empty shell, in reality operating for external material benefits for those at its head. To Luther the Catholic Church offered a life cluttered up with endless works of penance, and merits, a life which left no room for the developing of that faith which makes for a truly Christian life. By his indominatable will to arrive at a satisfactory solution of the problem of salvation, his faith succeeded in bursting forth in spite of impediments, and with the force of it giving him greater strength, he set about to translate it into the principles that would be valid in one's economic, social, political, and religious aspects of life.

Faith led Luther to attack the problem of improving the state. In his introduction to the Address to the German Nobility, he said, "We must renounce all confidence in our natural strength, and take the matter in hand with humble trust in God."[1] While his enemies were growing more bitter because of his strides toward freedom, his friends were gathering about him, glad to herald him as the leader of their cause. From first attacking a popular abuse in his own town, his work, because of its application to a universal evil, had gained national importance. A group of German noblemen, who held in contempt the authority of the Roman Curia, allied themselves through their leader, Hutten, to Luther's group, made up of men who found the iron-bound oppression of Rome deadly to their independence and progress.

1- Wace and Buchheim - First Principles of the Reformation- p. 19.

The walls of the Papacy had locked out faith from men's lives; they were bulwarks to keep out besieging reform parties; they formed a closed system which allowed for no new growth and consequently caused spiritual rottenness within. Luther's intent was to jam battling rams of truth into each wall, and as it tottered down, to give the world a glimpse of the hitherto unknown spiritual estate. He declared that the freedom of the individual conscisnce demanded a wiping out of the barriers that separated man's spiritual from his temporal realm.

Faith gave man individual authority declared Luther. His first attack was directed against the wall that upheld the power of the Church over the State. There had been a false device which placed the Pope, bishops, and priests as belonging to the spiritual estate, and princes, lords, and peasants to the temporal estate. The freedom of the individual conscience demanded a wiping out of the barriers that separated man's spiritual from his temporal realm. Luther struck the powerful blow that all Christians are of the spiritual estate because we are all one body, and we have one baptism, one gospel, and one faith - these make spiritual and Christian people. All men are equal, some should not be shut up secretly behind the walls of the Papacy in a self-appointed manner; all men are consecrated as priests by baptism; and to prove his authority, he turned to Scripture; "Ye are a royal priesthood, a holy nation." I Peter 2:9. Priests should

now be sent down from above as ready-made spiritual beings; they should be chosen by the people to function in the community to minister to the spiritual needs of the people as were cobblers and others who satisfied a particular need, and as such their power should be limited to their own field. Temporal and spiritual power should be co-functional, each supreme in its own realm.

Faith for Luther was a matter of individual conscience. The second wall of the Papacy held that the Pope could not err in matters of faith which he handed over to the people. Two opposing concepts came together: only the Pope could interpret the Scriptures sallied forth from the Church; man must make his own interpretation if his faith be valid, answered Luther's side. The clergy, because of their "inherited spiritual life", were mostly unlearned, and yet they guided men's understanding! Luther again turned to the Scripture for further backing. "If anything be revealed to another sitting by, let the first hold his peace." I Corinthians 14:30, all of which meant that the common man could have a true faith and understanding when the clergy did not. Then why not follow the common man? To accept the words of an ignorant clergy was to deny the existence of the divine spark in each individual...He asserted, "If the article of our faith is right, 'I believe in the Holy Christian Church; the Pope cannot alone be right; else we must say, 'I believe in the Pope of Rome', and thus reduce the Christian Church to one man, which is a devilish and damnable heresy."[1] All

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1 - Wace and Buchheim - op. cit. p. 27

men being priests, each one should decide for himself what is right or wrong in the matter of faith. His final blow against the second wall was that men should gain courage and freedom by studying the text themselves and not be dominated by the inventions of assumed authority which the Pope claimed.

Faith gave man the power to fight for what he believed to be right according to the light he had. The third wall:that the Pope can call a council, had to topple down when its adjoining sections had been broken away. If the Pope should not act in accordance with the Scriptures, men must stand by the Scriptures and punish the offender. To punish the Pope was a deadly weapon for Luther to manipulate. In living a life of faith in Christ, and progressing according to his principles, Luther felt that he must check evil; that when the need arose, especially when the Pope was the cause of offense, he must sponsor the meeting of a free council. To make emphatic the moral responsibility of men, he used the following comparison:

> "Would it not be most unnatural, if a fire were to break out in a city, and everyone were to keep still and let it burn on and one, whatever might be burnt, simply because they had not the mayor's authority or because the fire perhaps broke out at the Mayor's house? Is not every citizen bound in this case to rouse and call the rest? How much more should this be done in the spiritual city of Christ, if a fire of offence breaks out, either at the Pope's government or wherever it may!"[1]

The freedom of the council was a natural corollary of the freedom to interpret the Scriptures. With the walls of

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1 - Wace and Buchheim - op. cit. p. 29.

the Papacy razed to the ground in his attack, Luther proclaimed that the Christian nobility should now march forward against the Pope as a common enemy, "for the sake of the poor souls that such tyranny must ruin."[1]

With the way laid open for progress, Luther made plans for his forces to reconstruct the whole scheme of the Christian estate by his twenty-seven articles which he built up on the location where the Papacy walls had been. From the spoils of what had been the vast domain of the Papal claims wherein the Pope had been lord of all and servant to none, he produced the following transformations:

The high position of the Pope was lowered by several degrees and many of his authoritative trappings were stripped from him:

1. A bishop must be confirmed by the two nearest bishops and not by the Pope.
2. No temporal matters should be submitted to the Pope; he should guide only in the holy life of the Christians.
3. "Reserved cases", great sins which had required the Pope's absolution should be abolished, because people were cheated out of money and many poor consciences were confused and their faith in God warped.
4. The custom of kissing the Pope's foot must cease. It was unChristian for a sinful man to let his foot be kissed by one better than he.

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1 - Wace and Buchheim - op. cit. p. 45.

The sections surrounding the Pope's new stand were cleaned up and cleared up of useless equipment:

1. The Roman See must abolish papal offices. Pomp should have no place in Christian faith; it kept men from prayer.
2. Mendicant monasteries must be stopped; many of the monks, not understanding God's work and faith, tortured themselves by their own laws, but did not arrive at a true understanding of a spiritual and good life. This evil had been the first to irritate Luther back in monastery days.
3. Ministers should be allowed to marry, to allow for each man the liberty to do as he wills so that his conscience may be free, whichever way his desires are. Salvation of souls should be more important than arbitrary laws; Christ freed us from laws and gave us faith.
4. Fraternal orders must be abolished. In baptism one joined a fraternity of which Christ, angels, and saints were the leaders; all Christians were members of this one. Be true to it alone.

The outlying districts not immediately connected with and yet influenced by the Pope's position were dealt with as follows:

1. Pilgrimages to Rome must cease because men thought they were good works, when in reality they were covers for sinful practices.

3. The killing of John Hus was breaking God's commandments by violating faith and a safe conduct which was promised him. Heretics should be overcome with books, not fire.
3. Universities must be reformed. Universities were "Schools of Greek fashion and heathenish manners as taught by Aristotle; nothing was more devilish than an unreformed university".[1] This view was based on Luther's own university training when he rebelled against Scholasticism.
4. Excess of "stuff" in the temporal world must be done away with; it had accumulated from lack of faith. Excess "stuff" included: too much extravagance in dress; too many spices imported, too much buying on credit, too much eating and drinking, too many public brothels.

As Luther saw it, lack of faith was destructive of all forces in life - economic, political, and religious, and brought misery to those without it; but faith in God enabled man to maintain himself and to build his life on positive principles of goodness. Such was the germ of thinking which produced Luther's Address to the German Nobility.

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1 - Wace and Buchheim - op. cit. p. 80.

BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY OF THE CHURCH

With the barriers to man's freedom from the Roman system trampled under foot in his Address to the German Nobility, Luther, with the banner of faith held high as the standard for human striving, strode forth to conquer in an adjoining field, that of the Roman Papacy. The fire of justification by faith had emblazoned a lasting message on his consciousness and he could not rest his labours until he had given it to the world. This time his aim was at the very heart of traditional Catholicism, the sacramental system, by which grace was entrusted supernaturally through the sacraments, which, in turn, were deemed essential to salvation. To be effective, they had to be performed by ordained priests, which meant that the authority of the Church ruled over man's faith in the matter of salvation. Such a practice was entirely antagonistic to the individualistic approach to faith as made by Luther, and it was with the sure weapon of truth, based on convictions growing out of actual experience that Luther broke through into a hostile camp again with the declaration of independence that "the sacraments are mere signs of the forgiving love of God in Christ. Unless their message be believed, they are of no help, and if it be believed without them, they may be dispensed with."[1] He declared that the would-be believers of the Church had been bound and carried off into the Roman Catholic organism of the Church, where they were now liv-

1 - McGiffert - op. cit. p. 173.

ing as slaves to the tyrants of the Papacy on whom they had to depend for salvation. With courage of conviction, Luther had come into the enemy's camp, heralding a new day, when all men would be free and an inner impulsion of faith would take the place of an outer compulsion of works. In order to achieve such a victory, Luther planned his attack on the seven strongholds and in seven successive sieges he struck a compromise with three and destroyed the other four completely.

The Lord's Supper Luther saved as one of the sacraments, yet he took away its dependence on the Papal orders. He probed it by the following question, "By what authority can the Church take away bread or wine from the laity?"[1] Christ said, "This is my blood which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins". His blood was given for all for whose sins it was shed; therefore was it not for the laity as well as the clergy? No one had the power, as Luther believed, to deny reception in one or both kinds to the laity; to deny it was an act of impiety and tyranny and not the right of any council or Pope. The sacrament was not the privileged right of the ruling powers; it was the common right of all, and even if the captive laity were deprived of it, they could still be saved by their faith. There could be no necessity to faith; Christ gave the freedom of choice to the individual, so that each might decide for himself whether he would use

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1 - Wace and Buchheim - op. cit. p. 148.

one kind of both, saying, "This do ye, as oft as ye shall do it, in remembrance of me."

The Church dictated in regard to the Accidents, declaring that the traditional interpretation must be understood by all who partook. Luther dealt a blow here when he emphasized as the natural development of his faith that each person must decide for himself whether he would accept the doctrine of transubstantiation: that bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ and the recipient receives actual spiritual nourishment, or the doctrine of consubstantiation, that the physical phases of Christ's body do not come near the communion table, but the essence of Christ's body and blood comes down and is side by side with the bread and wine and the recipient receives the essence. Because the sacrament of the Lord's supper was so arbitrarily determined by the Papacy, mass had come to be a good work and a sacrifice, and this abuse had brought in others until faith in the sacrament, the very root of the sacrament, had been stifled and the sacrament had become a money-getting contract.

The sacrament of the altar, mass, had become entirely covered up by all the excess trappings, until a true and free knowledge of it was entirely hidden. Luther cried out to men to tear away the coverings and discover for themselves the pure institution of Christ, the simple words by which he perfected the sacrament. Mass was a promise of the remission of sins made by God; the only way man could approach such a promise was not by strength, by works,

or by merit, but only by faith alone. "For where we have the word of God who promises, there we must have the faith on the part of man who accepts. Thus it is clear that the beginning of our salvation is faith....Faith is followed by love, which in its turn, does every good work, because it worketh no evil, yea, it is fulfilling the law. There is no way a man can meet or deal with God but by faith."[1]

The clergy did not have the fire of faith in their souls, and so they could not start the fire in the souls of the laity, therefore superstitution about good works grew up. "For when faith perishes, and the word of Christ is silent, then straightway works and traditions of work, rise up in its place. By these we have been removed from the native land of our souls, as into the bondage of Babylon, and the freedom of possession is taken away. Divine promise should rightfully give man the possession of faith and his own independence to stand for himself and bear his own burdens. Mass was to offer help to those who had sad, confused and erring consciences. For faith is the sole peace of conscience, and unbelief, the sole disturber of conscience."[2]

With the banner of faith still held aloft, Luther faced the issue with the second stronghold, the sacrament of baptism, with the guiding principle that he who believes and is baptized will be saved. The human conscience, because of its own sinfulness, finds it the hardest thing in the world to believe it is saved, but it must believe.

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1 - Wace and Buchheim, op. cit. p. 162.
2 - Ibid, p. 181

A baptized man in reality is rich, because he has possessions that no man can take away; salvation is his eternally and will not disappear by any sins unless he refuses to believe. Paul taught that faith was a work of God, not of man. All other works are performed with us and by us; this one work He performs in us and without us. Baptism is the expression of spiritual rebirth, signifying death and resurrection, a death of the life of unbelief, a resurrection of the life of faith; it does not justify any man, but faith justifies in the word of promise to which baptism is added. All three: promise, faith, and baptism are various aspects of that transforming power that makes for the submerging of the old man, and the emerging of the new man. Herein Luther criticised the Church for its failure to teach the meaning of faith; it was so entangled by laws and ceremonies that the very essence of baptism was lacking, and the faith in Christ was hindered. With a burst of feeling, he exclaimed "I cry out on behalf of liberty and conscience, and I proclaim with confidence that no kind of law can with any justice be imposed on Christians except they will it."[1] Luther pointed to faith as the dynamic force that must come through every vein of the Papacy, both Church officials and laity. Baptism should be but a confirmation of that faith, a sign that man did believe.

Having established his claims in and accepted as part of his doctrine, the Papal strongholds of the Lord's Supper and baptism, Luther plunged into the institution

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1 - Wace and Buchheim - op. cit. p. 196.

of penance as a sacrament, using the same weapons of attack as he had on the other two, namely, that the true nature of a sacrament, the word of divine promise on one side, and our faith on the other, had been wiped out by abuse and only the empty shell remained. There were three divisions in this shell: contrition, which had been made a requisite for faith, not as a result of faith; Luther tore this out and transformed it by declaring that faith in divine promises is a requisite for a contrite heart, and not a result of it; confession, which had become a workshop to produce money by its works; Luther drove out this abuse with as just a wrath as did Jesus the money changers from the temple, and set up in its place the doctrine that confession is commanded by God alone, and that through it man finds peace by faith; satisfaction, which had become mutilated by indulgence abuse, and had warped the human soul; Luther sought to straighten out such a disfigurement by presenting the real meaning of satisfaction as a change of life as produced by faith in Christ.

In his lining up of forces to bring in the reign of freedom for human souls, Luther's untiring effort was to make over every section of the Papacy that had some valid means of support and to destroy every section that was oppressing the Christian man. Using as his test of a sacrament, Paul's definition, "A mystery and a hidden thing, which is made known by words, but is received by faith of heart"[1], he tried out the remaining four so-called sacraments, and

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1 - Wace and Buchheim - op. cit. p. 217.

finding them without the necessary content, he abandoned them. Confirmation, the laying on of hands, was a right or ceremony of the Church, an expression of a sacrament, but not one itself; matrimony, a divine institution incomparably above all laws, had existed from the beginning of the world among unbelievers as well as believers, and held in it no warrant of Scripture. Orders, an invention by the Church concerning the office of priests to perform duties of the Church and unlawfully called a sacrament, was not one of the sacraments, because the Church could not promise grace; its part was not to establish and ordain new promises, but to be established and ordained through the promises given by God. All men having been baptized were equally priests, and the ministry of the priests had been entrusted to them by common consent. No one should be of the orders unless he bewilling to preach the gospel and believe that he is not better than the laity because of this so-called sacrament of orders. Extreme unction, the anointing of the sick who were in danger, was based on the words of the Apostle James, "Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith shall save the sick and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed any sins, they shall be forgiven him." James 14,15. Extreme unction was not a sacrament; James connected the promise of healing and of remission of sins, not with the anointing but with the prayer of faith.

Luther saw then that the seven sacraments which had been the props to hold in place the traditional Catholic Church were weak and not sufficient to support their institution. They had been formulated for the purpose of nourishing faith but they had been so exploited by actual practice that they no longer served their purpose. It is a universal unwritten law that when any institution no longer satisfies the need for which it was originated, it should cease to exist, Luther heeded this law and sought to undermine a rotten foundation which was a danger to those living upon it. He salvaged the good parts, especially the Lord's supper, baptism and penance, and recognized certain of the other elements as aids to faith, and in so doing he endeavored to build for man an eternal foundation for salvation that would carry him through life. Luther, having thus stripped man of all the bonds that had meant man's salvation, and having shattered the walls on which he had depended for protection, found himself face to face with an individual who was pitifully unprepared to accept his new position of freedom. His next step was to help the Christian man to orient himself which he sought to do in his famous tract on Christian Liberty.

FREEDOM OF A CHRISTIAN MAN

It was not in Luther's destructive criticism of existing cultures and traditions concerning the Roman system and Papacy, but rather in the constructive teaching which he set forth concerning the substance of Christian living that he made his greatest contribution, one in which he proclaimed salvation for man not through fearful obedience to the dictates of another, but through that inborn faith which each individual must have. "Faith is a living fountain, springing up into eternal life;" as Christ called it in the fourth chapter of John. There is no definition to sufficiently explain faith, it is a thing of the spirit, the first and last thing in a Christian's life; it is that potential seed of the spirit which grows up within the soul, and flowers out in Christian living. Because of this faith, "Christian man is the most free lord of all and subject to none", and because of this faith, a"Christian is the most dutiful servant of all and subject to every one."[1] Luther based his whole tract on two phases of man's life as emphasized by Paul. "Though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all". 1 Corinthians 9:19, and "owe no man anything, but to love one another". Romans 8:8.

Here was man, an independent individual, absolutely free to rule his own life and be assured of his salvation. The question was, how could he, Luther, explain his own convictions about the meaning of faith so that it would have a

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1 - Wace and Buchheim - op. cit. p. 104.

like effect for all other free individuals who were bewildered by their freedom. He began by stating that there was a two-fold nature of man: spiritual and bodily; the spiritual was the taken-for-granted, unknown quantity of man's life. "The just shall live by faith", reiterated Luther. No outward things, neither good or ill health, neither sacred office or fasting would bring justification and Christian liberty; one thing along was necessary - the most holy word of God: "I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in me shall not die eternally" John 6:25, "If the son of man shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" John 8:36, and "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God", Matthew 4:4. This most holy word was the Gospel of God, concerning His Son, incarnate, suffering, risen, and glorified through the spirit. When man begins to believe, he is overwhelmed by his own sinfulness, he feels that he is too incompetent to carryon by himself and that he needs help; then he knows that Christ is necessary for him, because Christ has suffered and risen for man so that man, believing in Him, might by this faith become another man, all his sins being forgiven and he being justified by the merits of another, namely, Jesus Christ. Luther realized that men could not apply the above principles to their own lives without further guidance and so he told them that the first thing to do was to give up their reliance on good works, to strengthen their faith, to grow in knowledge, not of good works, but of Christ. Through his word he sought to help

them to obtain this knowledge which should lead to the way of faith.

Spiritually man was the most free lord over all as Luther had experienced it; fear of God bound man, love of God freed man. How could he wipe out that gripping fear that held men down and thus give them the freedom which he now had? The Scriptures stated a general principle which all Christians should follow: "If you wish to fulfill the law, and, as the law required, not to covet, lo! believe in Christ, in whom are promised to you grace, justification, peace and liberty. All these things you shall have, if you believe, and shall be without them if you do not believe."[1] Faith alone was the medium by which the soul could understand the meaning of the Word and thus gain freedom and a sense of mastery over all the world.

There were certain definite virtues to be derived from such a faith: Christian liberty would not make for bad life, but rather no one would need the law or works for justification and salvation; faith implied a confidence in God's truth and righteousness, God in return honored men with truth and righteousness; and faith "unites the soul to Christ, as the wife to the husband; by which mystery, Christ and the soul are made one flesh....His righteousness rises above the sins of all men; his life is more powerful than all death, his salvation is more conquerable than all hell....Thus the believing soul by a pledge of faith in

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1 - Wace and Buchheim - op. cit. p. 109.

Christ, becomes free from sin, endowed with eternal righteousness, life, and salvation of Christ."[1]

By accepting faith in Christ, by making a venture for Christ, man would find that he possessed two dignities of Christ; kingship and priesthood. Faith was in its very nature a liberating power which freed man spiritually and made him lord over all. As Paul said in Hebrews: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the belief in things not seen"; thus faith should open up to the believer a vast realm of possibilities of which he would otherwise be unaware. Under the rule of faith man was raised above the common distresses and dangers into the spiritual realm where he could control situations and make them for his good. Luther had found that an active living faith was basal for salvation and that "All things work together for them that are called" Romans 8:2. This truth was what he wished to put into the daily lives of his fellowmen. Every man stands helplessly before his God; he can go through life looking down with his attention centered on the little things of life, or he can go through life looking up with his attention drawn to powers higher than himself. If he choose the latter, he is risking everything in life in the venture of the unknown, he has a native confidence in things unseen, he is giving room for the mustard seed of faith in him to develop and carry him on. With such an inner power of faith man is in control of

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1 - Wace and Buchheim - op. cit. p. 113.

forces about him and is able to shape them for his own ends.

Luther sought to make the application of faith to human situations, to translate it from the theory into actual practice. He knew that his followers would be asking, If faith is all that is necessary for justification, then why do we need to do good works at all? Herein he set forth the natural result of his doctrine as it workedfor the outward man. If man were completely spiritual, there would be no need for good works, but since God granted a body to man, this body must have a place in God's plan. "As long as we live in the flesh, we are but beginning and making advances in that which shall be completed in the future life. To this part belongs the fact that the Christian is the servant of all and subject to all. For in that part in which he is free, he does no works, but in that part in which he is servant, he does all works."[1] Good works cannot produce a good man, but a good man can produce good works; thus the substance of a person must be good before good works can be done. As Christ said, "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit," Matthew 7:18. It matters not what the act itself is, but it is the motive behind the act that matters everything in a Christian. Luther was seeking to lead men back into the sources of goodness, truth, and beauty, all of which spring from man's faith.

Good works should not be rejected; but rather they

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1 - Wace and Buchheim - op. cit. p. 118,119.

should be understood in the true light and taught in the highest degree. In his sermons and lectures Luther sought to teach the word of grace and the truth about the promised remission of sin, so that faith might grow up in the souls of men. A life of faith must be a redemptive life for Christian man. The expression of man's faith should be in works toward his neighbor. As Luther said, "I will therefore give myself as a sort of Christ to my neighbor, as Christ has given himself to me, and will do nothing in this life except what I see to be needful, advantageous, and wholesome for my neighbor, since through faith I abound in all good things in Christ."[1] Man, as master of himself, of his own accord, brings his own body in subjection so that as servant, he may be able to serve others more freely and sincerely. Man is a social creature, he lives in relations with other men, he lives for all men on earth. Once again Luther relied on Paul, "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord." Luther defined the truly Christian life as follows: "h re is faith really working by love: when a man applies himself with joy and love to the works of that freest servitude, in which he serves others voluntarily and for nought; himself abundantly satisfied in the fullness and riches of his own faith."[2] Luther found through a detailed study of Paul that the latter had inculcated in his teachings the truths which

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1 - McGiffert - op. cit. p. 175.
2 - Wace and Buchheim - op. cit. p. 125.

he was stressing; "Christians should be subject to principalities and powers and ready to every good wish (Titus 3:1); not that they may be justified by these things, for they are already justified by faith, but that in liberty of spirit, they may thus be the servants of others and subject to powers, obeying their will, out of gratuitous love."[1]

Luther has been claimed the first modern man because he destroyed the authority of everything on earth except that of the individual influenced by his conscience. He discovered that limitation and freedom were necessary contradictions in a Christian's life; one must limit himself so that his life becomes organized, and in such self-limitation results a freedom of spiritual power which makes possible self-expression in the doing of God's will. To believe in Christ is to become enslaved by the principles of Christ, and to become free in the living out of those principles. Luther's Freedom of the Christian Man is the basis for the Protestant idea that salvation is the inner spiritual condition and not the result of good works.

1- Wace and Buchheim - op. cit. p. 139.

SERMONS AND OTHER WRITINGS

In his Magna Charta of Protestantism, Luther drew up a constitution for the rule of faith as a standard to be followed by those who desired to live under its regime. Just as all such documents have to be translated into the language of the people, so his major writings had to be enlarged upon in his sermons and other writings by explanations and illustrations. Luther wanted his followers to know where they stood in their religious beliefs, to see the relation between what they believed and what they did, and so he repeated the main doctrines again and again in his after works, using one phrase as the text of a sermon and the basis for his own thinking as he clothed a great truth in the simplest of language so that the most ignorant might have an idea of the message.

Luther's doctrine of justification by faith sent a shock through the existing Church which made it tremble on its foundations, crack apart and finally settle in two distinct parts. For centuries the ideal Christian life had been that of a nun or monk, with otherworldliness, the dominant note of Christian piety; Luther sent a lightning bolt into the midst of it by upholding the sanctity of human callings with the sacredness of life on earth as the dominant note. As he said, "In whatever calling God has placed you do not abandon it when you become a Christian, If you are a servant, a maid, a workman, a master, a housewife, a mayor, a prince, do whatever your position demands. For it does not

interfere with your Christian faith, and you can serve God rightly in any vocation."[1] Luther's continual emphasis was on the moral and religious life; he wanted people to live their faith. He explained how faith itself, on which everything depended, was a matter of innermost moral life and conduct; how it could not remain merely passive, but the faithful Christian must fulfil God's will with energy and activity in all relations of life. He used the following homely illustration to make vivid his point, "A man that depends on the riches and honors of this world, forgetting God and the welfare of the soul, is like a little child that holds a fair apple in the hand, of agreeable exterior, promising goodness, but within 'tis rotten and full of worms"[2]. The first requisite for sincere, honest Christian living was to be free from fear and concern for oneself. Virtue must be disinterested, a man who did right to escape punishment was not righteous. A Christian having caught the vision of God's gracious love in Jesus Christ would be eager to show his gratitude in service; he would have to be free from fear to give himself to do God's will. For Luther salvation through faith freed him from such fear and made him see that Christian life meant not only growth in character and piety, but unselfish labour for other's good. To quote from a sermon: "What is it to serve God and do His will? Nothing else than to show mercy to one's neighbor, for it is our neighbor who needs our service; God in Heaven needs it not."[3]

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1 - McGiffert - op. cit. p. 177
2 - Table Talks - p. 67
3 - McGiffert - op. cit. p. 178

Among the world's greatest sermons is one by Luther called "The Method and Fruits of Justification", based on Paul's letter to the Galatians 4:1-7. "Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father, Even so we, when we were children were in bondage under the elements of the world; but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." Herein Luther set forth in scholarly fashion his concept of servants and sons; the former, the sons of Cain, who, because he was unrighteous, was bound by law, the latter, the sons of Abel, who, because he was righteous, was free by faith and thus acceptable before God. He proclaimed the way to perfect justification as follows: "Hear Christ, and repose thyself wholly on him denying thyself and distrusting thine own strength by this means thou shalt be changed from Cain to Abel and being thyself acceptable before God, shall offer acceptable gifts to the Lord. It is faith that justifies thee, thou being endued therewith; the Lord remitteth all thy sins by the meditation of Christ his Son, in whom this faith be-

lieveth and trusteth."[1] There was a definite order of man's salvation outlined in four steps: hear the word of God, believe it, work through it, and be saved and happy. Luther declared that he who changed this order was not of God. Sons followed this order and thus worked with a mind that was free-willing; but servants started with works as a means of faith and thus found that they were bound down. Luther was trying to prove, as had Paul centuries before, that law with all its works could not make us anything but servants unless we first had faith in Christ.

In a different method of attack Luther dealt with Paul's figurative presentation in Romans 13:11-14: "And that knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof" The subject treated is not primarily of faith but of works the fruit of faith: "By sleep, the apostle signifieth a certain spiritual torpor wherein we are dead to good works; and by works of darkness, he signifieth evil works; for the night is a season in which men are often drunken, and do many foul deeds. On the contrary, to awake out of sleep, denoteth spiritual activity: for when the morning cometh, we cast

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1 - World's Greatest Sermons, ed. by Kleiser - p. 119

off sleep and go about the labours of the day; so when we receive faith, we arise from our spiritual inactivity, and do good works".[1] Herein he interpreted the spiritual application of the words sleep, darkness, and day; he further explained the metaphorical language by showing how Christ is the sun, the Gospel the day, faith the light by which we ought to see and watch in that day, and the armour of light the good works. "Put ye on the lord Jesus Christ" was a summing up of the meaning of the armour of light, a receiving of faith by which man became clothed with righteousness and thus appeared like Christ, imitating him in his meekness, patience, and forgiveness.

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1 - Luther's Sermons - from writings of Burckhardt - p. 134

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

Martin Luther's doctrine of faith was built up around the conviction that "the just shall live by faith". The development of his doctrine as it grew out of his own religious experience and the formulation of it as set forth in his writings have been presented in the body of the thesis. In conclusion, it is my purpose to give a digest of the main principles of his doctrine which were inherent in his life work and the foundation of all his writings.

Luther firmly believed that faith was everything in a Christian's life; it was a trust in God as a loving Father and as revealed through Jesus Christ; it was the root of all Christian life from which grew forth the tree of holiness and bore the fruit of good works. Faith was the personal experience of the merits of Jesus Christ; a transforming power in man's life by which the oppression due to fear was displaced by a freedom born of faith. He found faith to be an inner impulsion of the spirit, as opposed to the outer compulsion of works; a matter of the individual conscience rather than of the priesthood of the church.

Faith as the dominant factor in Luther's life had certain definite attributes which characterized it. In the first place, it brought a revelation of the righteousness of God as the creator and ruler of the universe to the believer through the active communion of the individual with God. Faith gave the assurance of the forgiveness of sins; a confessor must have inward faith in God

plus the sincere desire to repent before he could obtain true forgiveness. Without faith the sacraments of baptism the Lord's Supper, and penance were meaningless; they were but signs of the forgiving love of God in Christ which had value for the Christian man only when he took them as expressions of that faith which is the first and last thing in a Christian life. Luther found the answer to his doubtings concerning salvation in his doctrine of faith; not by any prescribed course of outward practices could a man gain salvation, but only by an inner acceptance of God as a just judge of man could he be confident of that bond between God and himself by which he was assured of his salvation.

Faith did something for Luther which nothing else could do; it gave him the power to accomplish that which seemed impossible in the eyes of those without his faith; it gave him the vision to see beyond the world as it was, into the world as it should be. Faith led him to attack the problem of improving the state, and consequently, he urged the German nobility to call a council over the authority of the Pope; faith forced him into the very structure of the Catholic Sacramental System, and he destroyed four out of seven of its sacraments; faith made him dare to proclaim himself a free individual, responsible tonone but his God; and, because of his love for God, bound to serve Him. Faith revealed to him the wretched state of ignorance of the masses of the German people, and inspired him to preach to them the gospel of a simple trust in God and His Son, Jesus Christ, that would satisfy their daily lives and

thus raise humanity to a higher level. Luther's doctrine of faith was the fountain source out of which sprang his eternal search after truth as revealed to him by God through the Scriptures, a doctrine out of which he developed his positive principles of Protestantism, basedon individual authority to understand truth and to apply it in Christian living.

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